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## “MAÎTRE PATELIN” IN THE GOTHIC EDITIONS BY PIERRE LEVET AND GERMAIN BENEAUT

Among a score of editions of the farce of *Patelin*, the Bibliothèque Nationale possesses two of great value and extraordinary interest, not merely to those who are concerning themselves with the history of printing in its infancy, but also to those who recognize the need of more accurate knowledge of the text of *Patelin*; for thus far no one has attempted to write a thoroughly scientific bibliography of this excellent and ever-youthful comedy.<sup>1</sup> Yet no one can hope to offer a critical text until the bibliographical work has been satisfactorily completed. We must, therefore, ascertain with all possible accuracy the age and other essential characteristics of every manuscript or printed book in which the text of *Patelin* has been handed down, but first of all we turn to the fifteenth century.

About 1485, at any rate not later than 1488, hardly a score of years after a grant of pardon,<sup>2</sup> issued by Louis XI, had recorded the existence and popularity of our farce, Guillaume Le Roy printed at Lyons what is probably the first edition of *Patelin*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The bibliography in the late Petit de Julleville's *Répertoire du théâtre comique en France au Moyen-âge* (Paris, 1886), though extremely useful, is incomplete and contains several mistakes. For instance, on p. 194 he catalogues the humbug facsimile of Levet's edition in the "Bibliothèque gothique" as if it were two different books, and he obviously was quite unaware that the *Patelin* of the "Bibliothèque gothique" is not only not a facsimile, but also not even an honest attempt to reproduce in modern Gothic type, etc., the woodcuts and the text of Pierre Levet. How anyone who had ever looked at genuine Gothic letter could have taken this clumsy imposture for a facsimile passes understanding. Baillieu's *Patelin* in the "Édition gothique" deserves to be blacklisted as a *supercherie typographique et littéraire*.

<sup>2</sup> Printed in the "Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes," second series, Vol. IV, p. 259.

<sup>3</sup> The *Livre des saints anges*, dated 1486, is commonly believed to be the last book printed by Guillaume Le Roy, but see n. 2, p. 125. Exactly the same font of type as was used for this book appears in the *Patelin*. From the exemplar of the *Livre des saints anges* preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale (D 1583) I copied the colophon, which runs as follows: Cy finist le livre des saintes anges Imprime a lyon par mai || stre guillaume le roy. le xx iour du mois de may. Lan de grace Mil || cccc. lxxxvi. Of course, there exists no absolute proof that Le Roy's *Patelin* is the first edition, but it is rather unlikely that the farce had been printed before so early a date as 1485. This is the year considered most probable by Mr. Émile Picot; Mr. Anatole Claudin, who believes Le Roy's edition to be the first, holds the opinion quoted in n. 1, p. 122. As it was through a clue given me by Mr. Claudin that I found the only extant exemplar known of this edition, I avail myself of this opportunity to say how well his cour-

Le Roy's source is unknown. The only manuscript<sup>1</sup> of *Patelin* that incontestably belongs to the fifteenth century differs too widely and too often from Le Roy's edition to have served as a model to be followed by Le Roy, or by whoever set the type for his edition, if the typesetting was faithfully done; but Le Roy's text was destined, within five years at most, to be accurately copied and preserved in the two editions<sup>2</sup> already mentioned as owned by the Bibliothèque Nationale.

What reason have we for assuming that Le Roy's *Patelin* is so closely akin to Levet and Beneaut? May not one or several editions now lost have intervened? This may be true; but whoever compares either Levet or Beneaut with Le Roy cannot fail to conclude that Le Roy is the direct ancestor of both,<sup>3</sup> even though one generation or more may have intervened. My own conviction, based on a word-by-word comparison of the three texts, is that either Levet or Beneaut copied Le Roy's *Patelin*, and copied with a loyalty rare indeed in that fifteenth century when printers of chapbooks, if not of more ambitious works, seldom corrected their proofs with care, or even conscientiously followed the manuscript or printed text before their eyes.

Now, if Le Roy's edition is the source of the editions by Levet and Beneaut, did each copy his text independently? Or, on the other hand, was Levet copied by Beneaut, or Beneaut by Levet? There is not one chance in a million that Levet and Beneaut independently copied Le Roy. But the evidences that Beneaut copied Levet, or that Levet copied Beneaut, are overwhelming.

tesy and knowledge availed me. I am equally indebted to the well-known bookseller, Mr. Edouard Rahir, and to Mr. A. Rosset, who gave himself the trouble to return from his country seat to Lyons in order that he might send his treasure to me at Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale and catalogued thus: "Ms. fr., Nouv. acq. 4723." Of this manuscript, which lacks vss. 1-226, 654-56, 1357-1406, and 1581-99, I hope to give a full description at an early date.

<sup>2</sup> Levet's *Patelin* is catalogued "Réserve, Ye 243"; Beneaut's is "Réserve, Ye 237." I have accurate copies of these editions.

<sup>3</sup> The similarity is so great that Le Roy hardly offers a score of important variants; the differences are due mainly to the ordinary changes in spelling made by uncritical printers. Mr. Claudin devotes pp. 29-112 in Vol. III of his splendid work to Le Roy. On p. 89 he reproduces in facsimile two pages of Le Roy's *Patelin*. Elsewhere I shall describe this edition at length, showing how it is related to MS 4723, *nouv. acq.*, and why it deserves to be considered the standard text. Yet it seems to me now that Mr. Claudin somewhat overrates the superiority of Le Roy's edition to those of his immediate followers.

Before I attempt to demonstrate which copied the other, it will be necessary to prove that the copying was actually done. A short description of each edition will supply the proof. We may begin with Levet.

The copy of Levet's *Patelin* in the Bibliothèque Nationale is supposed to be the only one in existence. It is in perfect condition, containing no false leaves and no restorations. Time has somewhat yellowed its pages, but not one is marred or torn, and the print is seldom blurred or broken, though the ink has probably lost some of its blackness, having been laid on thinner than in the edition by Beneaut. On the title-page, over Levet's well-known device,<sup>1</sup> occur these words: *Maistre pierre pathelin*. On p. 3, signed a. ii., is a woodcut showing Patelin in parley with Guillemette; then comes the *incipit*, to wit, *Maistre pierre commence*; then come five verses. There are eighty-two pages in all, with signatures as follows: a to d by sixteen, e by twelve, f by five. Levet's *Patelin* like Beneaut's, contains 1,599 verses,<sup>2</sup> normally octosyllabic, and in both editions one is struck by the omission of the second hemistich of vs. 1530, *Or n'en croyez rien*—a telltale feature of great importance when we seek to establish the genealogy of later editions. As vss. 1502-40 are all counterfeit in Le Roy's *Patelin*, it is, of course, impossible to say whether his edition omitted these words or not. Levet's *Patelin* is paged precisely like Beneaut's, and both editions are alike in size and general style; the type is similar, but not identical. On the whole, Levet's work is better than Beneaut's: fewer letters are blurred or broken, capitals are employed more consistently, and there are not so many misprints as in Beneaut. Levet's illustrative woodcuts are placed exactly like Beneaut's.

Beneaut's *Patelin* is also the only copy known. It is in excellent condition, though the margins are in a few places a little torn; but not a leaf has been lost or inserted, and the text has not been tampered with. My reason for mentioning here the condi-

<sup>1</sup> A white heart, point down, surmounted by a white cross. Inside the heart is the monogram PL. The whole figure stands out on a black background, and round it is a square frame, white, with geometric decorative figures. Levet used this device in his *Villon* (1489), but it appears in other works of still earlier date. Mr. Claudin reproduces it in facsimile in his *Histoire de l'imprimerie en France*, Vol. I, p. 439.

<sup>2</sup> The odd number is due to the fact that three verses have a single rime.

tion of each of these editions is, of course, that my argument may rest on a firm basis.

On p. 1<sup>1</sup> of Beneaut's *Patelin* are the words *Pathelin le grant et le petit*. Now, what is the meaning of this odd title? In the colophon of his undated edition of *Patelin* and its two sequels,<sup>2</sup> Jehan Bonfons (fl. c. 1547–1568) says, *Cy fine le grant Maistre Pierre Pa || thelin*. Hence Beneaut's puzzling title may mean that he printed one of the sequels; yet another conjecture, not wholly new, seems more convincing. Here it is: In 1489 Levet published *Le grant testament Villon, & le petit*,<sup>3</sup> of which an exemplar is preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale bound under one cover with Beneaut's *Patelin*.<sup>4</sup> But Beneaut also published a *Villon*,<sup>5</sup> though one year later than Levet, and it is doubtless to Beneaut's *Le grant testament villon & le petit* that the words *le grant et le petit* on the title-page of Beneaut's *Patelin* refer. It is pretty certain that Beneaut's *Patelin* and his *Villon* were sold together, as is suggested by the dates and by the double, partially abbreviated, title which Beneaut employs on the first page of his edition of *Patelin*. This difference between the two editions of *Patelin* by Levet and by Beneaut is striking, but it of course does not imply any real differences between their texts. Nor is it good evidence that Beneaut and Levet were allied in business, though such seems to have been to some extent the case.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> So far as I know, no fifteenth-century book has numbered pages. Signatures alone were employed, but they were often omitted. My numbering is merely for the sake of convenience.

<sup>2</sup> The *Nouveau Pathelin* and the *Testament Pathelin*.

<sup>3</sup> *Le grant testament Villon, & le petit || Son codicille. Le iargon & ses balades* [Levet's device]. The colophon reads thus: *Cy finist le grant testament || maistre francois villon. Son || codicille, ses ballades & largō || Et le petit testament. Impri || me a paris Lan mil. CCCC. qua || tre vings et neuf.*

<sup>4</sup> Petit de Julleville's conjecture (*Rép.*, p. 191, footnote) as to a possible interpretation of this fact need not be taken more seriously than he himself takes it. The "singulière coïncidence" is quite as likely to be due to the fact that "Patelin" and Villon were both in fashion. Following out Petit de Julleville's implied theory, we might attribute *Patelin* to Guillaume Alexis.

<sup>5</sup> *Le grant testament villon & le petit. son codicille, le largō & ses balades*. With this colophon: *Cy finist le grant testament maistre francois villon son codicille ses ballades & largō Et le petit testament Imprime a paris par germain bineaut Imprimeur demourant au saumont deuant le pallois lan mil IIII C quatre vings & dix*. Notice that all the title and the whole colophon through the word *paris* in Beneaut's *Villon* are identical with the corresponding parts in Levet's *Villon*. The resemblance is due, no doubt, to the fact that Beneaut copied Levet. Is it not likely that Beneaut followed the same course in the same year by copying Levet's *Patelin*?

<sup>6</sup> See Claudin's chapters on Levet and Beneaut in his *Histoire de l'imprimerie en France*.

Beneaut used two of the woodcuts in Levet's *Villon* to adorn his *Patelin*. These cuts<sup>1</sup> represent “la grosse Margot” (also “la belle heaulmiere”) and Villon. In other words, we have here merely a couple of stock illustrations or *passepourtout*, and they are quite vague enough to pass for Patelin and for Guillemette as well as for François Villon and the two strumpets whose ways he sings.

Levet's cut of Villon portrays Patelin on p. 3 of Beneaut's edition. Beneath it are the words, *Maistre pierre commence*, followed by five verses, precisely as in the *Patelin* of Levet. As in Levet, there are eighty-two pages in all, including the title-page, which I have, for convenience, numbered 1. In Le Roy's *Patelin*, on the other hand, there were originally eighty-eight pages and no illustrations. But I should call attention to the following identical peculiarities to be found in Levet and Beneaut, but not in their indubitable prototype, Le Roy: (The features to be noted are indicated by italics.)

- Vs. 17 homme plus saige fort le maire  
[Le Roy has *fors*]
- Vs. 52 tenu lune des *sages* testes  
[Le Roy has *chaudes*]
- Vs. 60 qui dient qui sont *auocas*  
[Le Roy has *quilz dient qui sont aduocas*.]
- Vs. 82 Ce sont *ne sont mie*  
[Le Roy rightly omits *ne sont mie*, which reading merely spoils the verse by making it contain twelve syllables.]
- Vs. 204 que ceulx donc vous deues retraire  
[Le Roy has *dont*.]
- Vs. 386 ie vous donne *ceste yeil* a traire  
[Le Roy has *cest oeil*.]
- Vs. 444 penca *aluy* comment lauray ie  
[Le Roy has penca *a luy* comment lauraige.]

Finally, both leave space enough for about six lines at the bottom of p. 50 (signed d. ii.) under vs. 1006 (*asses drap pour faire des robbes*), yet nothing is really omitted.

Blunders or oddities such as these are unlikely to have been

In Vol. I, p. 443, he says: “Levet parait s'être associé temporairement avec cet imprimeur [Beneaut] pour la mise au jour d'une édition des *Croniques des roys de France*.”

<sup>1</sup> For facsimiles see Claudin, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 440.

independently copied by Levet and Beneaut from an edition now lost, no matter how closely imitative the two typesetters of these parts of their editions may have been: we should of course expect to find a certain number of variations from the text of Le Roy; for the printers of fifteenth-century chapbooks were generally not only slavish in copying what was wrong, but also inaccurate in reproducing what was right. The fidelity shown by these three books is remarkable. It was the early sixteenth-century printers who first wofully mangled or modernized the text of *Patelin*.

The features that I have now pointed out—to wit, the extraordinary similarity of make-up and text in these two editions—seem to demonstrate beyond question either that Beneaut copied Levet's *Patelin*, or that Levet copied the *Patelin* of Beneaut. Excellent scholars, men versed not only in literary knowledge, but also in the history of printing, have held both opinions. Some are sure that Beneaut copied Levet; others state that Levet copied Beneaut.<sup>1</sup> Often no reason has been given for holding one or the other opinion; often the woodcuts have been called to witness,<sup>2</sup> or other facts and fancies have been brought into play to prove either that Levet copied Beneaut or that Beneaut copied Levet. Is it possible to ascertain the truth?

So far as external evidence<sup>3</sup> is concerned, we have, I think, only one fairly significant fact: The type used by Levet for his *Patelin* is the same as he used for his *Villon* in 1489, and appears,

<sup>1</sup> Among others, Mr. Claudin himself, in a letter dated July 23, 1904, writes as follows: "The best text [of *Patelin*] is the text of what I think is the first edition printed at Lyons with the types of Guillaume Le Roy, without date, but certainly before the edition of Paris, 1490, G. Bineault, or the edition of Pierre Levet without date, but published after the edition of Bineault, on account of the same cuts appearing with broken lines." That the cuts are not the same will be evident to whoever examines them closely or reads pp. 123 and 124 of the present article and n. 2, pp. 123 and 124.

<sup>2</sup> In Vol. II, p. 304, of his *Histoire*, etc., Mr. Claudin writes: "On trouve, dans ce livre [i. e., in Beneaut's *Patelin*], des figures sur bois: ce sont les mêmes illustrations que celles de l'édition [of *Patelin*] que Pierre Levet avait publiée l'année précédente en même temps que le *Grant Testament de Villon*." What warrant the eminent scholar has for declaring so positively that Levet published his *Patelin* in 1489, I do not know. Hardly anything stronger than an inference seems warranted by the facts. In Vol. I, p. 443, *op. cit.*, Mr. Claudin had, indeed, made a much more conservative statement; for he says: "Ce livre [Levet's *Patelin*] ne porte pas de date, mais il a dû paraître vers la même époque que le *Grant Testament de Villon* [1489]." But both these statements are contradicted by that quoted in n. 1, p. 122.

<sup>3</sup> By "external evidence" I mean all evidence not derived from the two editions of *Patelin* by Levet and Beneaut.

Bous feries bien de la tendre  
Le iuge  
He dea ie ailleurs a entendre  
se vostre partie est presente  
deliures bous sans plus datente  
et nestes bous pas demandeur  
Le drappier  
Si suis



Pierre Levet's woodcut of the court scene in *Patelin*. Reproduced from the original by permission of the Bibliothèque Nationale.



or reappears, in good condition in his *Patelin*. This may be called "evidence," but it would hardly pass muster in court.

The internal evidence, which is infinitely more substantial, is of two kinds: first, the dimensions and condition of the two woodcuts which both editions seem to have in common; second, the text.

In Beneaut's *Patelin* two woodcuts,<sup>1</sup> apparently, but not really, identical, illustrate the court scene. In Levet's *Patelin* the court scene is illustrated by a woodcut apparently the same as those in Beneaut, but a close examination, even with the naked eye, reveals not only that the two cuts in Beneaut are not exactly alike, but also that the cut in Levet differs in several respects from either of the two cuts in Beneaut. Not only is the Judge distinctly and strikingly cross-eyed in both Beneaut's cuts, whereas he is looking along parallel lines in Levet, but a dozen other characteristics prove that Levet's block was not used in Beneaut's press, and we can say without hesitation that Levet did not use, in printing his *Patelin*, either of the blocks employed by Beneaut.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For a facsimile of one of the two cuts of the court scene in Beneaut's *Patelin*, see Claudin, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 304. So far as I am aware, no facsimile of Levet's cut of the court scene has ever been published. But Mr. Léopold Delisle has granted me permission to have facsimiles made of all the woodcuts in Levet's *Patelin*, and within a comparatively short time they will be published, either in my edition of *Patelin* or in some other accessible volume.

<sup>2</sup>Mr. Claudin, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 440, says: "Les bois de Pierre Levet n'ont été employés que par lui et ne sortaient pas de son atelier." Very likely this statement is quite true, yet it hardly seems to agree with the following remark on p. 443, *ibid.*: "Les illustrations de *Maître Pierre Pathelin* [in Levet's edition] reparaissent, avec des cassures dans les filets, dans une autre édition datée du 20 décembre 1490 et sortie des presses de Germain Benaut ou Bineault, . . ." That this is not true has already been said in n. 1, p. 122, where the evidence is indicated. See also n. 1, p. 124.

The following table of dimensions and the comparative description beneath should do away with all doubt. (The figures indicate centimeters.)

	Beneaut No. 6	Levet No. 5	Beneaut No. 7
Left border.....	9.80	9.95	9.95
Right border.....	9.90	9.95	10.20
Upper border.....	6.15	6.25	6.30
Lower border.....	6.15	6.15	6.20
Diagonal.....	11.60	11.70	11.77
Diagonal.....	11.60	11.65	11.79
From the sole of Patelin's shoe to the highest point of the Judge's chair.....	9.87	9.25	9.31

Thus Levet's woodcut has about the same dimensions as those in Beneaut's edition, but it will be seen that they are not identical. As the objection may be raised that the blocks from which these cuts were printed may have shrunk or swollen in the interval

Hence any theory as to the priority of either edition which is based on the presence of breaks<sup>1</sup> in the cuts falls to the ground and may be discarded for good and all.

Now, if the woodcuts betray nothing whatever that might settle the question, what clue is offered us by the textual test?

In my opinion, there is but one slender bit of evidence which at first blush might seem to indicate that Beneaut's *Patelin* came first. Here it is: At vs. 855 Beneaut reads *quant il deust canter se meesse* (*sic*), which, barring the obvious misprint, *meesse*, is good Picard, whereas Levet's reading, *chanter sa messe*, is not Picard, but good French of the Ile-de-France. Now, the tendency of early scribes and printers was to modernize, or to put foreign, dialectal forms into more familiar language, and not to restore or critically edit a text; but it is quite probable that Germain Beneaut, though in all likelihood he, like Pierre Levet, was a Parisian, knew enough Picard to be aware that in Picard they said *canter* for *chanter* and *se* for *sa*? In other words, in this single case Beneaut, or perhaps his typesetter, may have been critical enough to notice and bear in mind the following words:

Le drappier  
Mais comment parle il proprement  
picart dont vient tel cocardie  
Guillemette  
Sa mere fust de picardie  
pour ce le parle il maintenant.<sup>2</sup>

between the appearance of Le Roy's *Patelin* and that of Beneaut or Levet (for there is no likelihood that Levet or Beneaut preceded Le Roy) we had best consider other features.

Beneaut's woodcuts, like his type, are blacker than Levet's and have broader lines. But other differences seem to indicate more clearly still that different blocks were used by Beneaut and Levet. For instance, in L, *Patelin*'s foot rests on the lower border; not so in B. In B the Judge, as has been said, is cross-eyed. In L the bottom of the Shepherd's crook is further from the lower border than in B. The upper edge of *Patelin*'s left sleeve is broken in B; furthermore, the Draper's left eye is larger in B, and his jaw is broken near the ear. On the Shepherd's waist in B is a mark quite different from what we find in L. On the other hand, the outer edges of the side borders are a little rougher in L than in B, but B has a break in the right upper corner which L has not. Now, if the breakage theory (see n. 1. p. 124) is worth anything, and if the other characteristics which I have pointed out have any significance, we must make this conclusion: Levet did not use either of the blocks used by Beneaut, nor did Beneaut borrow the block used by Levet, but either they copied or used blocks employed by an earlier printer in an edition now lost, or Beneaut made his two blocks from the cut in Levet, or Levet made his block from one of the two cuts in Beneaut. If such be the case, we cannot rely on these woodcuts to decide the priority of either. We must therefore appeal to the text.

<sup>1</sup> If either printer had borrowed a block from the other, the breaks would naturally have left the telltale blanks which Mr. Claudin calls "cassures dans les filets."

<sup>2</sup> Vss. 858-61, quoted exactly as they stand in Le Roy.

In *Le Roy*, whose *Patelin* is certainly the prototype, and probably the very text that either Beneaut or Levet copied, vs. 855 reads *Quant il deust chanter sa messe*. Hence Beneaut's *canter* and *se* must be due either to Beneaut's critical faculty<sup>1</sup> or to the highly unlikely possibility that he copied from an intermediate text now lost, and this intermediate text must have contained the Picard forms.

I have dwelt on this shred of evidence purely in order to present the case fairly, leaving no stone unturned, endeavouring to analyze scientifically every clue, whether it might speak for Beneaut's priority or for the priority of Levet. But here is one more witness whose testimony seems to me to prove beyond question that Levet's *Patelin* is the older text: Beneaut omits vs. 179, *lung a laultre comme len fait*. If Levet had copied Beneaut, how could Levet have given this omitted verse? Surely no one who is at all acquainted with the ways of fifteenth-century printers will imagine that Levet supplied the missing line out of his memory or out of some other edition.

Unless my argument is faulty, Pierre Levet, and not Germain Beneaut, copied *Le Roy*'s *Patelin*, and Levet's edition must therefore have appeared between the year 1485, or thereabout,<sup>2</sup> and shortly before December 20, 1490.<sup>3</sup> The most likely date is 1489. Yet, so far as textual criticism is concerned, it matters little; the exact year is of far greater importance to those who are trying to shed more light on the activities of fifteenth-century printers. In the firm belief that Levet's *Patelin* is not only the oldest complete edition extant, but that it is also the oldest extant example of a comedy, in a modern tongue, illustrated with woodcuts made especially for its sake, and not borrowed with little or no sense of their fitness, we may rest content. Levet's *Patelin* was no doubt looked upon as a mere chapbook in the year 1489, or thereabout, but it is now a priceless treasure; for not only is it

<sup>1</sup>Or to that of one of his workmen. Whether Beneaut set all or any of the type for his *Patelin* is, of course, unknown. MS 4723 gives *canter* and *se*.

<sup>2</sup>In the letter already quoted from (n. 1, p. 122), Mr. Claudin says: "No book of Guillaume Le Roy is dated after 1488, so it is certain for me that the Lyonese edition preceded the Parisian one of 1490."

<sup>3</sup>Beneaut's colophon is as follows: Explicit maistre pierre pathelin || Imprime aparis au scaumō deuāt le || palois par germain beneaut ïprimeur || le xx<sup>me</sup> iour de decembre || lan mil iiiciliixx et dix.

a beautiful specimen of early printing, but it contains an excellent text of the best comedy written in Europe between the last work of Terence and Udall's *Roister Doister* (1552 or 1553), and from its perfectly preserved pages we can supply the 134 verses now represented by counterfeits in the only known extant edition of the *Patelin* by Guillaume Le Roy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>My edition of *Patelin* will be so arranged as to enable whoever chooses to do so to restore every letter of Le Roy's edition. In another article I hope to give a full description of the edition by Le Roy. Meanwhile we may be fortunate enough to get, either from Mr. Claudin or from some other authority, a little more definite information than we have now as to the activities of this Lyonese printer.

RICHARD HOLBROOK.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.